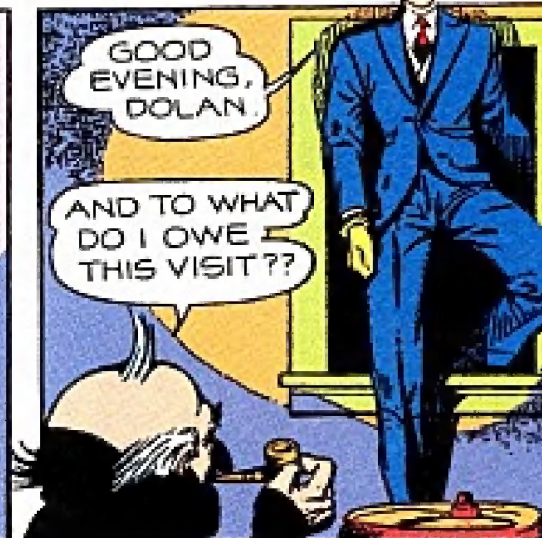


By
Will Eisner

ONE NIGHT, A GLOVED HAND
SOFTLY OPENS THE WINDOW
OF THE COMMISSIONER'S
PRIVATE OFFICE.

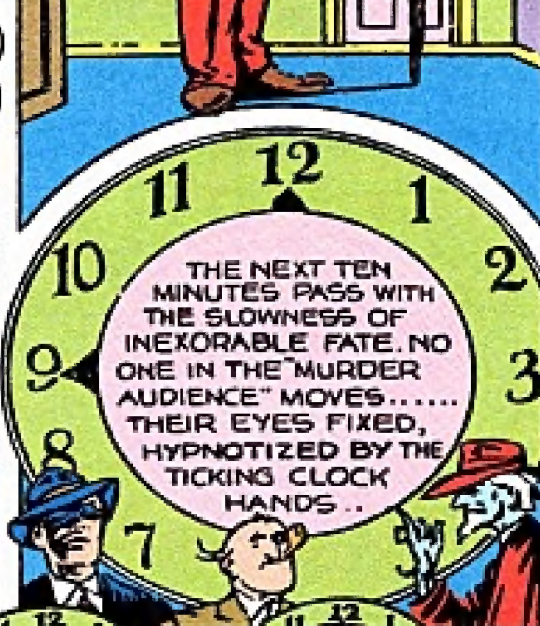
AND THE TALL, ATHLETIC
FIGURE OF **THE SPIRIT**
CALMLY STEPS INTO
THE HALF LIGHT.

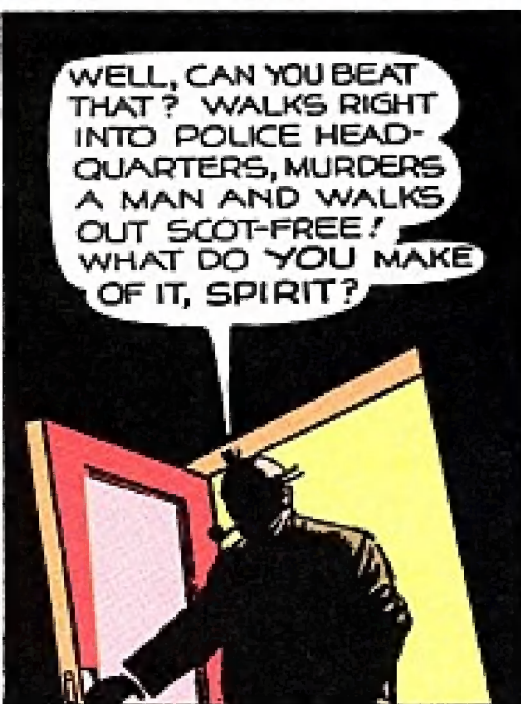
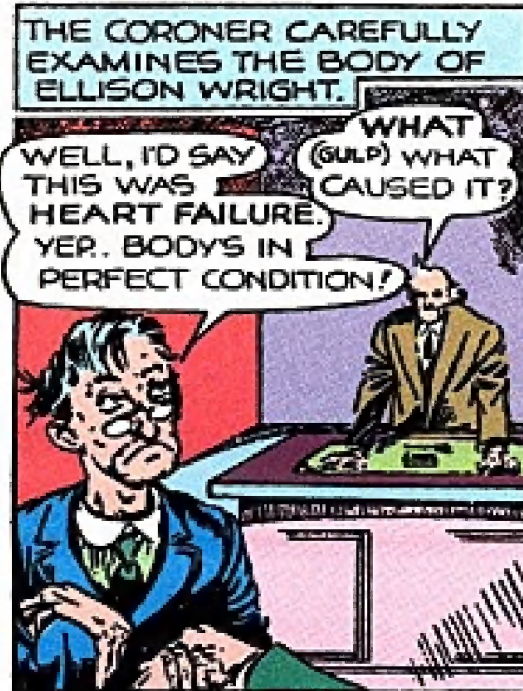
KNOWN ONLY TO
COMMISSIONER DOLAN,
THE SPIRIT, IN REALITY
DENNY COLT, WHO ONCE WAS
ERRONEOUSLY BURIED IN WILD-
WOOD CEMETERY, NOW USES HIS
TOMB AS A HEADQUARTERS FOR
HIS ONE-MAN WAR AGAINST
CRIME AND CRIMINALS EVEN
BEYOND THE LONG ARM OF
THE LAW.. THEREFORE
IT IS HARDLY SURPRIS-
ING THAT DOLAN
DOES NOT START,
WHEN...



GOOD
EVENING,
DOLAN.

AND TO WHAT
DO I OWE
THIS VISIT??





WITH THE DRAMA OF A RISING "LAST ACT" CURTAIN, DAWN PAINTS HESITATING STREAKS ACROSS THE NIGHT SKY, AS THE MOON RELUCTANTLY SEEKS REFUGE UNDER THE RETREATING NIGHT. ROARING UP THE NEGLECTED DRIVEWAY TO AN ANCIENT MANSION, MR. MIDNIGHT'S CAR COMES TO A SCREECHING HALT BEFORE THE PORCH . . .



TAKE THE CAR INTO THE GARAGE, BEPPO I'M GOING TO MY STUDY!

UP DARK, WINDING STAIRS TO A HALF-LIT STUDY.



AH! HOW LONG HAVE I WAITED FOR THIS MOMENT! WREAKED MY VENGEANCE ON ELLISON AND DEFEATED THE SPIRIT!



ONLY ELUDED THE SPIRIT, MR. MIDNIGHT! THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF THE LAST ACT!

THE SPIRIT! HOW?

EASY, MR. JOHN CALIBAN, ALIAS MR. MIDNIGHT! EASY! AFTER I DISCOVERED THE TINY SCRATCH THAT DIDN'T BLEED. MUD ON YOUR SHOES. YOU SAID YOU CAME FROM THE COUNTRY AND I FOLLOWED YOU IN MY AUTOPLANE. GETTING IN

WAS SIMPLE YOU'VE NO SERVANTS

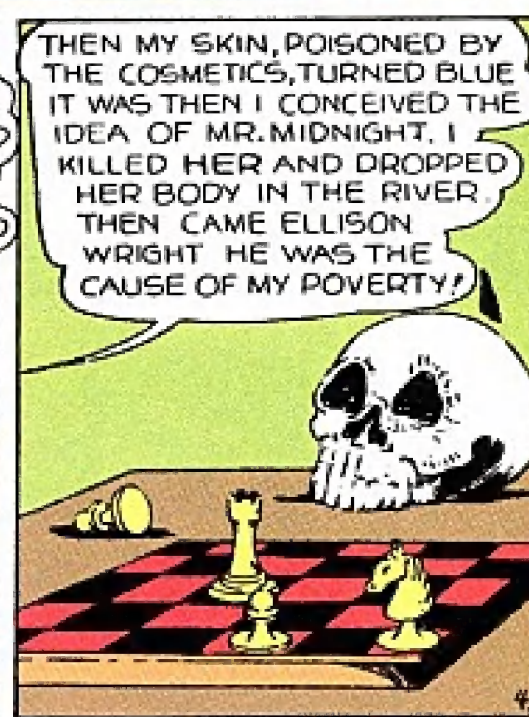


HA HA! VERY WELL.. YOU'VE FOUND ME OUT. WON'T YOU SIT DOWN AND PLAY A BIT OF CHESS? Y'KNOW I'VE ALWAYS ADMIRERD YOU, SPIRIT!



..NOT SO LONG AGO THE GREAT NAME OF JOHN CALIBAN WAS MAGIC ON BROADWAY. THE GREAT LOVER" AH. YES! GIRLS SWOONED AT MY PROFILE. THEN MY CASTLE CRASHED! I FELL IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER MAN'S WIFE IT RUINED ME. NEVER MIND HER NAME! ELLISON GOT HOLD OF SOME LETTERS I

ONCE FOOLISHLY WROTE AND BLACKMAILED ME!



THEN MY SKIN, POISONED BY THE COSMETICS, TURNED BLUE IT WAS THEN I CONCEIVED THE IDEA OF MR. MIDNIGHT. I KILLED HER AND DROPPED HER BODY IN THE RIVER. THEN CAME ELLISON WRIGHT HE WAS THE CAUSE OF MY POVERTY!



HORRIBLE, MIDNIGHT, YOU'RE NOTHING BUT AN ORDINARY KILLER! I'M TAKING YOU IN.

YORICK, DO YOU HEAR HIM? I'VE PLAYED EVERY ROLE, BUT NOW I PLAY MR. MIDNIGHT TO THE END!



MR. MIDNIGHT'S FACE SETS IN HATE

AFTER ALL, I REALLY HAVEN'T COMMITTED A PERFECT CRIME IF YOU ARE ALIVE TO BEAR WITNESS.



THEN I'M TO GATHER, YOU WISH TO KILL ME, TOO?

YOU ARE QUICK TO GET THE IDEA.



NO MOVE!

YOU FORGET MY ONLY SERVANT BEPPO!

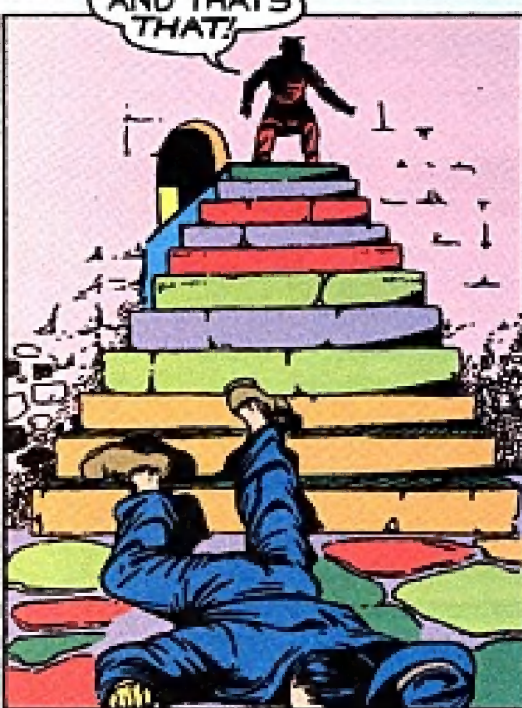
HA HA HA! AND THAT'S THAT!



AND YOU FORGET MY JIU JITSU, PAL!



OFF BALANCE, THE SPIRIT IS EASY PREY TO A HARD UPPERCUT.



WE'LL SET FIRE TO THIS PLACE, BEPPO. HA-HAAA!



LAST ACT.. HA! MR. MIDNIGHT DEFEATS JUSTICE AND THE CURTAIN COMES DOWN IN A BLAZE OF GLORY...

THE SPIRIT!

YES, AND I'M CALLING FOR AN ENCORE!

FOR A LITTLE GUY,
YOU SURE CAN
SCRAP!



THE SPIRIT'S BACK IS TURNED..
MR. MIDNIGHT IS QUICK TO SEIZE
THE OPPORTUNITY. HE HURLS
"YORICK" WITH TELLING EFFECT



LEAVING THE UNCONSCIOUS
SPIRIT. THE TWO HURRY
THROUGH THE CORRIDORS



FLAMING DEBRIS SHOWERS
FROM ABOVE..AN INSTANT
LATER THE ROOF COLLAPSES.



BACK SOMEWHERE IN
THE FLAMES, THE SPIRIT
RECOVERS HIS SENSES

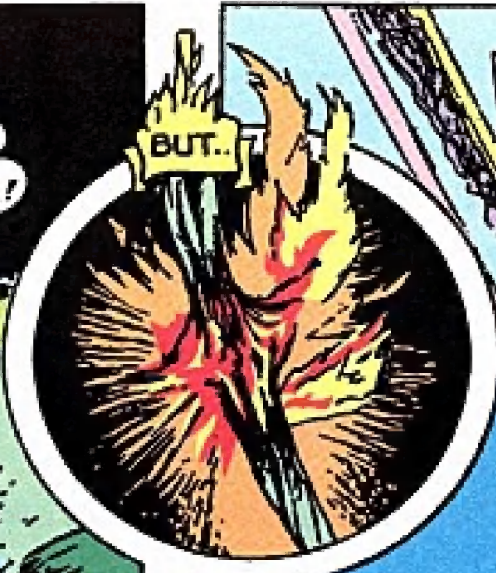


LIKE A BLAZING COMET, THE
SPIRIT, HIS CLOTHES AFLAME,
HURTLES DOWNWARD WITH
INCREIBLE SPEED.

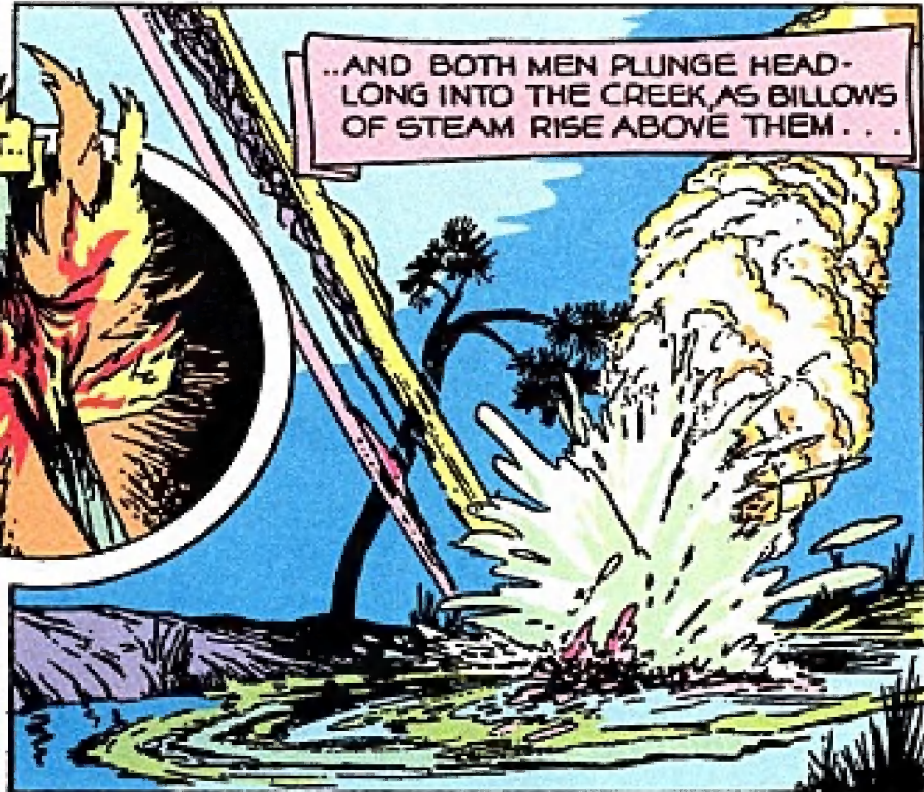




COME BACK HERE!

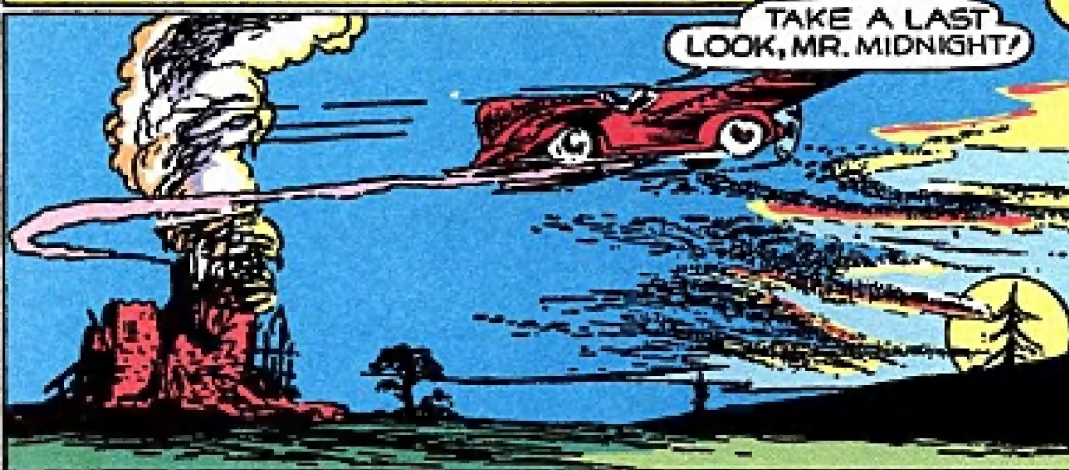


BUT..



...AND BOTH MEN PLUNGE HEAD-LONG INTO THE CREEK AS BILLOWS OF STEAM RISE ABOVE THEM...

A FEW MINUTES LATER THE SPIRIT CIRCLES HIS AUTO-PLANE ONCE OVER THE SMOLDERING RUINS..AND THEN HEADS EAST INTO THE RISING SUN.



TAKE A LAST LOOK, MR. MIDNIGHT!

AT HEADQUARTERS ONCE MORE...

SO THAT'S WHY HE KEPT SHARPENING HIS NAILS!

YES, HIS NAILS WERE COATED WITH A POWERFUL POISON INDUCING HEART FAILURE..HE MERELY SCRATCHED ELLISON WHEN HE HANDED HIM THE PEN. THE POISON ACTS IN FIVE MINUTES!



YOU ARE VERY CLEVER, SPIRIT, BUT THE LAST SCENE IS MINE!

MR. MIDNIGHT DIGS A GASH IN HIS ARM WITH HIS POISONED FINGER-NAIL.



STOP! HEY! HE'S KILLED HIMSELF WITH HIS OWN DEVICE!



EXIT, MR. MIDNIGHT.. ENTER JUSTICE TRIUMPHANT AS THE CURTAIN FALLS ON THE LAST ACT OF MURDER!

WELL, I'LL BE. THE CLOCK HAS STOPPED EXACTLY AT TWELVE!